

Message Text

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 00470 220719Z

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EXDIS

TEL AVIV/JERUSALEM FOR SENATOR PERCY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JO, US, XF

SUBJECT: SENATOR PERCY'S MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER RIFAI

REF: AMMAN 456

1. IN ONE HOUR CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER RIFAI JANUARY 20 ATTENDED BY AMBASSADOR, STAFF MEMBER CALVIN FENTRESS AND JORDAN AMB TO WASHINGTON ABDULLAH SALLAH, SENATOR PERCY RENEWED SOME OF THE SAME GROUND AS IN REFTEL ABOVE.

2. SIGNIFICANT AREAS OF DIFFERENCE WERE IN RIFAI'S MORE COMPREHENSIVE TREATMENT OF QUESTION OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST AS A STATE. RIFAI SAID ISRAEL WON THAT RIGHT FROM ARABS AS A RESULT OF ARAB DEFEAT IN 1967 WAR. IT COULD NO LONGER BE CALLED INTO QUESTION BY ARABS, BUT ISRAEL HAD TO NEGOTIATE RETURN OF 1967 TERRITORIES AND SOON OR AREA WOULD DRIFT BACK TO WAR. RIFAI MENTIONED MAY-JUNE 1975 AS DEADLINE WHEN UNDOF MANDATE COMES UP AGAIN.

3. RIFAI STRESSED THAT EGYPT HAS TO MOVE. FOR A RETURN TO A LINE EAST OF THE PASSES, EGYPT WOULD GIVE ISRAELIS
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SECRET

PAGE 02 AMMAN 00470 220719Z

DE FACTO DEMILITARIZATION WITH UN FORCES PRESENT IN

THE AREA, REOPEN SUEZ TO WORLD TRAFFIC, AND AGREE TO PASSAGE OF ISRAELI CARGOES (NOT ISRAELI FLAG SHIPS). BUT SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE FOR SYRIA ON THE GOLAN EVEN A FEW KILOMETERS WOULD HELP ASAD. (RIFAI LATER ADDED TO AMBASSADOR IN CONFIDENCE THAT HE AND KING WOULD DO ALL THEY COULD WITH ASAD TO HELP SELL EVEN A SMALL STEP ON THE GOLAN IF SOMETHING COULD BE ASSURED FOR HIM, EVEN IF IT DID NOT MEET HIS INITIAL DESIRES. ALL US HAD TO DO WAS TO LET KING KNOW WHAT IT WANTED).

4. FOR THE FUTURE, JORDAN'S RELATIONS WITH SYRIA WERE GOOD AND WITH IRAQ WERE IMPROVING. ASAD HAD HELPED JORDAN IN 1970 AND CAME TO POWER AS A RESULT OF THE 1970 DEBACLE WHEN THE BAATH ORDERED SYRIAN TROOPS INTO ACTION AGAINST ASAD'S ADVISE AS MINDEF. HE USED THE DEFEAT TO SWING INTO POWER.

5. ON GENEVA, HE DID NOT SEE IT AS BEING HELPFUL NOW, BUT IF ANOTHER SERIES OF STEPS COULD BE WORKED OUT, GENEVA MIGHT BE USEFUL TO TIDE US OVER PERIOD WHEN US PRE-OCCUPIED WITH 1976 ELECTIONS.

6. SENATOR ASKED RIFAI ABOUT SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON. RIFAI REPLIED THAT HE THOUGHT IN GENERAL THE LEVEL OF FEDAYEEN ACTIVITY AGAINST ISRAEL HAD NOT INCREASED MARKEDLY OVER PAST FEW MONTHS. HOWEVER, IT SEEMED TO HIM THAT ISRAEL WAS STEPPING UP THE PACE. HE SUSPECTED ISRAELIS WISH TO KEEP GENERAL SITUATION IN TURMOIL AND UPSET AND WERE USING SOUTH LEBANON AS A PLACE IN WHICH TO DO IT. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT ALSO SEEMED AS IF PLO BY KEEPING UP A STEADY LEVEL OF ACTIVITY WISHED ALSO TO IDSRUPT THE ORDERLY PROGRESS IN THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND SOMEHOW INHIBIT MOMENTUM. POSSIBLY THIS WAS SOMETHING WHICH SYRIA WAS PUSHING THEM TOWARD OR AT LEAST ENCOURAGING THE PLO, ESPECIALLY THE REJECTIONISTS, TOWARD THIS OBJECTIVE.

7. IN A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF US SUPPORT FOR JORDAN THROUGH ITS BILATERAL PROGRAMS, RIFAI INDICATED CONCERN THAT US PROGRAMS FOR ISRAEL WERE RAPIDLY IMPLEMENTED

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 AMMAN 00470 220719Z

AND LAVISHLY FUNDED. CONTRARILY, JORDAN HAD TO WAIT A LONG PERIOD FOR THE DELIVERY OF NEEDED EQUIPMENT, PRICES SEEMED TO BE ESCALATING OUT OF SIGHT, AND EQUIPMENT WHICH IT BADLY NEEDED WAS SOMETIMES UNAVAILABLE. JORDAN HAD ALSO RECEIVED FUNDING FROM ARAB NATIONS FOR SUPPORT OF ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. IN THE PAST, THESE FUNDS HAD TENDED TO PLACE JORDAN AT THE MERCY OF THE POLICY OF THE COUNTRIES WHICH SUPPLIED THE EQUIPMENT. IF

JORDAN ACCEPTED MONEY, THEY ALSO HAD TO ACCEPT THE POLICY OF THE ARAB DONOR STATES. JORDAN WAS UNCOMFORTABLE IN PUTTING TOO MUCH OF ITS FUTURE IN THE HANDS OF SUCH ARAB DONORS, LIKED ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US, AND FELT THAT THE US WAS CONSIDERATE IN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH JORDAN IN A WAY WHICH THE ARABS WERE NOT.

8. FINALLY, SENATOR REPEATED WHAT HE HAD TOLD KING (REFTEL) ABOUT HIS APPROACH TO ISRAELIS. AS LONG-TERM SUPPORTER OF ISRAEL, HE WOULD INSURE THAT THEY RECEIVED FULL BACKING IN THE EVENT THERE WAS AN UNPROVOKED ATTACK BY ANY ARAB STATE. HOWEVER AND HE HAD MADE THIS CLEAR TO THE ISRAELIS AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS TRIP, IF ISRAELIS PRE-EMPTED OR MOVED TO PROVOKE AN ARAB ATTACK, THEY COULD NOT COUNT ON HIS SUPPORT IN THE CONGRESS. HE SAID HE WOULD WORK TO INSURE THAT THE BALANCED VIEW WHICH THE SECRETARY WAS ARTICULATING FOR US POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST WAS SUPPORTED BY AN INCREASING NUMBER OF HIS SENATORIAL COLLEAGUES.

9. COMMENT: PRIME MINISTER RIFAI TOLD ME FOLLOWING THE DISCUSSION WITH SENATOR PERCY THAT HE WAS NOT ONLY PLEASED BY THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE SENATOR HAD BECOME KNOWLEDGEABLE OF THE INTRICACIES OF ARAB POLITICS (HE TOLD THE SENATOR THIS DIRECTLY) BUT ALSO THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE SENATOR WAS BALANCED AND EVEN-HANDED IN HIS TREATMENT OF ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUES. HE WAS VERY SURPRISED AND EXTREMELY PLEASED TO HEAR THE SENATOR'S STRONG STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF AN EQUITABLE AND FAIR STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS AND HIS WILLINGNESS TO OFFER THE ENCOURAGE MORE SENATORS TO SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY IN THIS ENDEAVOR. AMBASSADOR SALAH ALSO MENTIONED TO ME HIS PLEASURE AT THE OPEN-MINDEDNESS AND BALANCE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 AMMAN 00470 220719Z

REFLECTED IN THE SENATOR'S VIEWS. END COMMENT.
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